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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001565

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [CG](#) [MONUC](#)

SUBJECT: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN CONGO COULD THREATEN  
TRANSITION

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

11. (C) Summary: Following the funeral service for the 180 victims of this weekend's massacre in the refugee camp in Gatumbe, events in eastern Congo took a turn for the worse. Rebel commander Nkunda issued an inflammatory declaration repudiating any prior connection he might have had to the transition government and calling for the institution of a new government, and at the same time moved significant numbers of his troops into more heavily fortified positions. It is unclear how, if at all, Monuc Bukavu would respond to a new attack against the city. RCD-G VP Ruberwa and the majority of the RCD government ministers, together with a significant number of parliamentarians, are gathered in Goma, where they met August 17 with Governor Serufuli and regional military commander Obed. Ruberwa is popularly supposed to be on the verge of quitting the transition. The above plays out against a background of increasing hostility toward the RCD, Tutsis in general, and Ruberwa in particular. The situation is not yet irreparable, but particularly potential military action and the RCD developments could pose a significant threat to the transition. End Summary.

Military Movements: Nkunda Shifting Ground, FAB At The Border

12. (C) Monuc Bukavu sources told polcouns August 16 that regional military commander Mbuza Mabe was reporting that rebel commander Nkunda's forces had begun an advance upon Bukavu from three directions. A subsequent Monuc air reconnaissance August 17 indicated that Nkunda had consolidated some forces in Hombo and near Banyakiri, and had further fortified these sites with what appears to be artillery. During a special CIAT meeting August 18 a Monuc military briefer reported that Nkunda's forces had clashed with government troops near Miti (not far from Hombo) during a southward movement from Numbi, Gungu and Itombo. SRSG Swing reported that Nkunda had called him yesterday to assure Monuc that his statement was not intended to threaten the government. Meanwhile, in response to Burundian troops gathering at the border in southern S. Kivu near Uvira (following a press statement by the Burundian military commander that he was prepared to invade the DRC in retaliation for this weekend's massacre), Mabe sent a battalion to reinforce the Congolese side of the border. A Monuc Bukavu source subsequently told poloff that they have confirmed the presence of two brigades of RDF elements in Burundi, and said that apparently these elements are planning to join the Burundian forces poised at the Congolese border. Monuc reported that they have moved some troops from Bukavu to Uvira with the intent of maintaining highly visible patrols on the Bukavu-Uvira access. In response to a question from a CIAT member, Swing confirmed that Monuc still commands only limited resources in the region to prevent a determined military movement, i.e., across the border or directed against Bukavu. Meanwhile, hostility in Bukavu toward Monuc is already mounting again, as citizens apparently believe the worst.

RCD Split Deepens, Ruberwa On The Verge....

13. (C) RCD-G VP Azarias Ruberwa, together with the majority of the RCD ministers and a significant number of RCD parliamentarians, attended the August 17 burial of the Gatumbe massacre victims, and then went on to Goma, where most remain. (Note: Some of the RCD leaders chose not to go to the funeral, fearing that it was on one level a pretext to lure them from Kinshasa. Others did attend, but already have returned to Kinshasa, expressing disgust for the "hard liners" in Goma. End Note.) The government and the MLC believe that Ruberwa is preparing to leave the transition; this concern reportedly prompted S. African President Mbeki to call Ruberwa in Goma August 17 to urge him to continue with the peace process. RCD sources in Kinshasa told us August 18 that although Ruberwa personally could leave the transition, he does not have the authority to take the RCD, as a party, out of the government, because he does not have a quorum of Founders' College members in Goma with him. (Comment: This strikes us as a technicality which could be useful for the more moderate members of the RCD in the event that the party ruptures completely in coming days, which at the moment appears possible. End Comment.) MLC SecGen told

PolCouns August 18 that the MLC has not yet formulated a policy in response to these recent developments, but rather is awaiting Ruberwa's press statement. VP Bemba reportedly was considering calling Ruberwa to urge him to stay with the transition. President Kabila, currently in Tanzania for a meeting on the Burundi peace process, reportedly will return soon to Kinshasa, perhaps as early as this evening.

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Comment  
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14. (C) Government hardliners postulate that Ruberwa is staging a crisis in order to force concessions on military integration. We think that is far-fetched. It seems more likely that Ruberwa finds himself impaled on the horns of a dilemma, i.e., Kigali may be (as many here believe) demanding that he and the RCD leave the transition and he, Ruberwa, cannot see a way to avoid doing so. In some ways, Nkunda's declaration simplifies the Kivus dynamic, as he has now voluntarily placed himself outside the pale, although the FADRC's ability to successfully implement the so-called military solution remains as dubious as ever. The key to keeping the transition on track, we believe, lies in keeping Burundi and Rwanda out of the DRC, and Ruberwa in the fold. Certainly public talk of invading -- on any pretext -- only feeds DRC fears and contributes to instability.

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